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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Yediot reported that First Lady Laura Bush plans to make a six-day visit to Israel and other Middle East countries on May 19 in order to push the peace process forward.

All media highlighted PM Sharon's address at the death camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau Thursday. He said: "With all the desire to advance the peace process, we must always stand on guard and rely only on ourselves. Jews can only rely on themselves." Sharon also blasted the use of Holocaust symbols by those who object to the Gaza disengagement plan.

The media reported that Qassam rockets and mortar shells were launched at Israeli targets Thursday and this morning. One house was hit in Sderot. Yediot reported that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz has instructed a revision of Israel's self-restraint policy. Ha'aretz reported that the IDF uncovered an eight-meter deep tunnel Thursday afternoon between Egypt and Israel, close to the town of Rafah. Jerusalem Post reported that the Karni goods crossing in the northern Gaza Strip was closed for several hours Thursday due to warnings that terrorists were planning an attack there.

Ha'aretz reported that the Gush Katif (Katif Bloc) Council of Rabbis will release a letter in the next few days calling on area residents to refuse to sign a document to participate in the Nitzanim relocation plan.

Ha'aretz quoted Col. (res.) Danny Tirza, the Defense Ministry official in charge of the separation fence, as saying that Israel will offer state land to the Palestinians whose land was confiscated for the construction of the fence. Tirza spoke at a High Court of Justice debate on four petitions filed by West Bank villagers. The newspaper quoted Chief Justice Aharon Barak as saying that the state must provide farmers whose land was seized with other land. If that is impossible, then they must be compensated. Jerusalem Post and other media quoted the Association of Civil Rights in Israel as saying in a statement to the High Court that the International Court of Justice in The Hague was correct in declaring that the fence was a gross violation of international law and should be moved back to the Green Line.

Israel Radio reported that President Bush has extended U.S. sanctions against Syria. The station quoted him as saying that Syria endangers U.S. security.

Ha'aretz reported that Israel has agreed to Russia's proposal to give two transport helicopters to the PA. Leading media reported that Fatah appears to have won the local elections in Gaza and the West Bank Thursday. Late this morning, Israel Radio reported that as 70 percent of the votes have been counted, Fatah garnered 51 out of 84 local authorities, while Hamas took 28 local authorities. Results from all of the communities are expected to take several days.

Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., Danny Ayalon, as saying that Naor Gilon, the head of the embassy's political department, who allegedly held

contacts with Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin, will return to Israel this summer for personal reasons. Yediot quoted sources in the embassy that the decision to remove him was made mainly because of the concern that he could be indicted in the affair.

Ha'aretz reported that the Association of University Teachers (AUT) in the UK has decided to call a special meeting to reconsider its boycott of the universities of Bar-Ilan and Haifa.

All media reported that leaders of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Holy Land announced Thursday that they are breaking off all contact with Patriarch Irineos I because of corruption suspicions and that they are considering having him dismissed. Irineos has been accused of leasing prime church property to Jews.

All media reported that an IDF soldier bearing a tattooed swastika on his left arm, who admitted to maintaining contacts with neo-Nazi groups abroad, was arrested in Ariel (West Bank) Wednesday night. His mother also admitted holding Nazi views. They emigrated from Latvia in 1996.

Maariv reported that Lebanese Gen. Michel Aoun is returning to Lebanon after 15 years in exile. He told the newspaper that he is in favor of peace with Israel, but that "this is not the most important thing now."

Ha'aretz printed an article by former U/S of Defense Dov Zakheim, who advocates nourishing civil society in Middle Eastern countries to achieve long-term political change in the region.

A Maariv/Teleseker poll found that:
-Only 54 percent of Israelis support Sharon's disengagement plan.
In response to two questions related to Israel's upcoming 57th Independence Day:
-"When you look at what is happening in Israel, do you think that Israel is on the right course?" Yes: 46 percent; no: 44 percent.
-"Do you believe Israel will continue to exist after 2048?" Yes: 77 percent; no: 14 percent.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote from Auschwitz in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The Americans are fed up with the Israeli refrain blaming Abu Mazen.... There is a problem with this refrain: it is true. On the other hand, it has exhausted itself."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Abu Mazen has improved the atmosphere of 'law and order' in the Arab towns. This is a lot but not enough."

Ha'aretz publisher Amos Schocken wrote in Ha'aretz: "[The amendment to the Citizenship Law restricting marriage with foreigners] raises the question of whether Israel truly wants the type of peace of which the Prime Minister has spoken."

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Until the U.S. abandons the contrived belief that what happens to Israel has no connection to what happens to the U.S., it will be unable to see -- and thus thwart -- the dangers that await it."

Block Quotes:

1I. "The Americans Are Getting Addicted"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote from Auschwitz in popular, pluralist Maariv (May 6): "Washington is setting off concern. The Americans are fed up with the Israeli refrain blaming Abu Mazen, demanding that he 'fight terror,' making him responsible for everything, and concluding that he cannot do anything. There is a problem with this refrain: it is true. On the other hand, it has exhausted itself. The Americans are now getting addicted to what they call the 'Abu Mazen process.' They hope to see results eventually. Meanwhile? Patience. Thus, expansive American-international headquarters are being established in Israel and the Palestinian Authority to coordinate disengagement and

its supervision.... Israel's problem is that General [William] Ward and envoy [David] Welch ... arrive empty-handed and dole out the burden of proof and their demands almost equally between the Palestinians and us. They respond to each Israeli claim with an assertion of theirs -- regarding plans for the future, hopes, the lack of an alternative. In the IDF, even in the close vicinity of the Defense Minister, some people are currently encouraging a change in tone -- abandoning the moaning, irritable tune; trying to integrate productive optimism; 'bombing' the Palestinians with easing measures, mainly in the economic and humanitarian fields; and preparing the alibi for the next crisis. It turns out that the game is not entirely sold out. The judge is objective. One should prepare."

II. "Abu Mazen Could Do a Lot More"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 6): "Abu Mazen has clearly made an effort to meet some of the demands presented to him so that he can make a good impression with Bush.... His people are making efforts to coordinate with Israel on the disengagement although it is not clear if they will be able to maintain quiet in the Gaza Strip. Abu Mazen has improved the atmosphere of 'law and order' in the Arab towns. This is a lot but not enough as long as Qassam rockets are still sent in Israel's direction. Abu Mazen has support in numerous world capitals and similar support among many in Israel, too, including Defense Minister Mofaz. It is not clear how true that is for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon who so far has not yet met with him. It is important that such a meeting be held before Abu Mazen leaves for Washington."

III. "Does Israel Want Peace?"

Ha'aretz publisher Amos Schocken wrote in Ha'aretz (May 6): "The amendment to the Citizenship Law -- which prevents an Israeli citizen, and particularly an Arab Israeli, from marrying someone who was born in the occupied territories and from living with that person in Israel -- is a source of harsh discrimination and will exacerbate the boycotting of Israel by the Arab public. A similar decree, if imposed on Jews in any country, would have elicited a harsh Israeli reaction, and justifiably so.... Spouses from different countries in the EU can marry and live together with their partners in whichever of the member countries they choose. The citizenship of each of the spouses remains, or can remain, that of the country of which he or she was a citizen prior to the marriage. Anyone who aspires to peace between us and the Palestinians and the Arab people must understand that this, to a large extent, is the meaning of such a peace. The amendment to the Citizenship Law is discriminatory, undemocratic and it turns Israel into an apartheid state. It also undermines the aspiration to establish this kind of peace between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and between us and the Palestinians and the Arab peoples of the region. Above all, it raises the question of whether Israel truly wants the type of peace of which the Prime Minister has spoken."

IV. "Wake Up Washington!"

Extreme right-wing columnist Caroline B. Glick wrote in conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (May 6): "If the Bush administration had not made the intellectually unsupportable decision to refuse to accept that the Palestinian war against Israel is a crucial front in the global jihad, the President and his advisers would no doubt be asking Sharon some very hard questions right now. Israel's planned withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria present a tangible threat to U.S. national security interests from both military and psychological warfare perspectives. On the military level, one of the core principles of the U.S. counter-terror strategy is to deny terrorists sanctuary. Yet Gaza and northern Samaria [the northernmost part of the West Bank] are both poised to become new operational bases for global terror organizations.... Unless one ignores reality, it is impossible to sustain an argument that as presently constituted, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza will do anything other than strengthen the cause of global jihad and Arab authoritarianism. Unfortunately, until the U.S. abandons the contrived belief that what happens to Israel has no connection to what happens to the U.S., it will be unable to see -- and thus thwart -- the dangers that await it."

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